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ABSTRACT

There are two currents of social studies reform. One involves the search for an appropriate social studies core and is spearheaded by state governments and scholarly organizations. The second reform movement flows toward a social studies curriculum based on urgent domestic issues and the realities of global interdependence. The cross-purposes of these two reform currents seem to contribute to the continuing confusion about what should be taught, how, and for what reason. A revised social studies core that stresses preparation for citizenship through history, civics, and geography has emerged from the push for a revised core curriculum. On the other hand, the issues-oriented reform movement has tended toward a balkanization of the social studies program, with thousands of minicourses and study units being developed. From the many proposed curriculum reforms, common themes have emerged, including: (1) a clear commitment to democratic values; (2) knowledge of local and national heritage; (3) understanding the form and function of government and the economy; (4) a need to engage in more active civic participation; (5) a strong emphasis on active learning; and (6) an appreciation of other cultures and value systems. These broad areas of consensus lead to a cautious optimism that social studies reform will come of age. (SM)

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# ASCD CURRICULUM UPDATE:
# DELAY PERSISTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES REFORM, BUT SIGNS POINT TO HEADWAY JUST AHEAD

by

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*Developing Leadership for Quality in Education*

ASCD

# Curriculum Update

*August 1987*

*Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*
*125 North West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2798*
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## Delay Persists in Social Studies Reform, But Signs Point to Headway Just Ahead

Nick Anthony

**By David C. King**

Last June, New York City teacher Tracy Goddard and her eleventh-grade government class capped their study of a century of immigration law with a tour of Ellis and Liberty Islands. The same day on the opposite coast, juniors in Helen Moore's Los Angeles classroom interviewed a visitor from the Immigration Service. Students asked well-informed questions about the new amnesty law for illegal aliens.

Both teachers were unaware that, the day before, a front-page story in the *New York Times* had trumpeted several organizations' plans to reinvigorate traditional courses in civics and government.

In miniature, these three events represent what has been happening in the social studies over the past four years and why that appears to have stymied major improvements needed in the social studies.

Two currents now run toward social studies reform. One involves the search for an appropriate social education core. This highly visible, well-publicized effort is spearheaded by state governments and their departments of education as well as by scholars, professional organizations, federal agencies, and foundation-funded education organizations.

A crosscurrent flows toward a social studies curriculum based on urgent domestic issues and the realities of global interdependence. This approach—founded less on a codified system of content and more on responsiveness to particular issues, resources, and limitations—frequently centers on community

experiences, such as the New York trip and the Los Angeles interview. This trend has a lower media profile, but it appears to reflect local decisions, perhaps even a grass roots movement.

Both positions continue a historical debate over what social studies is or ought to be, and both take their present forms as responses to the major studies of schooling in 1983 and 1984. Neither position, however, has as yet eradicated some major problems that remain virtually unchanged by four years of reform: murky goals, overemphasis on textbooks and coverage, perfunctory support for higher-order thinking, and lack of commitment where values should be stressed.

The persistence of such problems, however, is hardly prima facie evidence of abject failure. Within each current are signs of improvement: new courses, ideas, materials, workshops, and support. Curriculum frameworks are being completed or renewed. Some evidence even hints that people in each current are beginning to understand the purposes, respect the concerns, and accommodate the needs of people in the other current.

Such indications portend a new wave of improvement, almost a new generation of reform. Another clue pointing in that direction is the more confident voice of experience evident in recent social studies literature. For four years, recommendations for school change have been based on the 1983 and 1984 studies of schooling. This year, the literature has referred to those studies less and concentrated more on what has been learned since the studies were done.

Within the general aim of school reform, a need to do better in history, geography, and civics has been specified. Consequently, under the currents and crosscurrents in social studies, a tide of expectations is rising, and 1987 may turn out to be a turning point for delayed reform in the social studies.

## What Deserves Emphasis

National and state improvements in the amorphous realm of social studies have started with a scrutiny of what deserves emphasis.

Certainly history belongs. In *High School*, for example, Ernest Boyer proposed one-year studies of American history, American government, and Western civilization, along with a one-term study of a non-Western culture.[1] Boyer's curriculum was not far removed from the traditional social studies pattern formulated by the historic National Education Association Commission in 1916. That commission established a familiar sequence: geography and American history in grades seven and eight, followed by civics, European history, American history, and American government in high school.[2]

The importance accorded history was highly compatible with the back-to-basics philosophy. Within only a few months of the study-of-schooling reports, the Council for Basic Education urged as "an irreducible minimum" two years of American history, one year of European history, and an "in-depth" study of at least one non-Western society.[3]

The reaffirmed value of history has been joined, however, by a resurgence of interest in two neglected areas of knowledge: civics and geography.

The studies of schooling, of course, had pointed out how ill-prepared students are for citizenship. For example, in 1982, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found some shocking knowledge gaps in 17-year-olds:

- Two-thirds of American students believed the President has the power to declare a law unconstitutional.
- A majority could not identify the issue involved in the landmark Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- Only 4 percent knew that "the Communist Party can nominate a candidate for President of the United States."[4]

A similarly distressing void has been documented in knowledge of place. In January 1987, for example, when CBS affiliates checked out what 5,000 high school seniors in major cities knew about basic geography and social studies, they found that a lot of young people are oblivious not only to where foreign countries are, but to where the *United States* is!

- In Dallas, Texas, 25 percent of the students tested could not identify the country that borders the United States on the south.
- In Boston, Mass., 39 percent could not name the six New England states.
- In Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn., 63 percent could not name all seven continents.
- In Hartford, Conn., 48 percent could not name three countries in Africa.
- In Kansas City, Kans., 40 percent could not name three countries in South America.
- In Atlanta, Ga., 42 percent could not answer the question, "When it is noon in Atlanta, what time is it in San Francisco?"
- In Baltimore, Md., 45 percent could not correctly respond to the instruction, "On the attached map, shade in the area where the United States is located."[5]

## Dropping Civics, Picking It Up

While no precise data are available, it is clear that a great many schools have dropped government or civics courses, or both. In a study to be published this fall, education historian Diane Ravitch and U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Chester Finn report for NAEP that half of the 17-

***In the effort to consolidate a social studies core, 1987 may turn out to be a pivotal year.***

Anitra Gordon

year-olds they interviewed had never taken civics or government and that only one in six had studied either subject for as long as a year.[6] Apparently the same conditions prevail as in 1983, when Boyer commented, "Civics has become a non-word in the curriculum."[7]

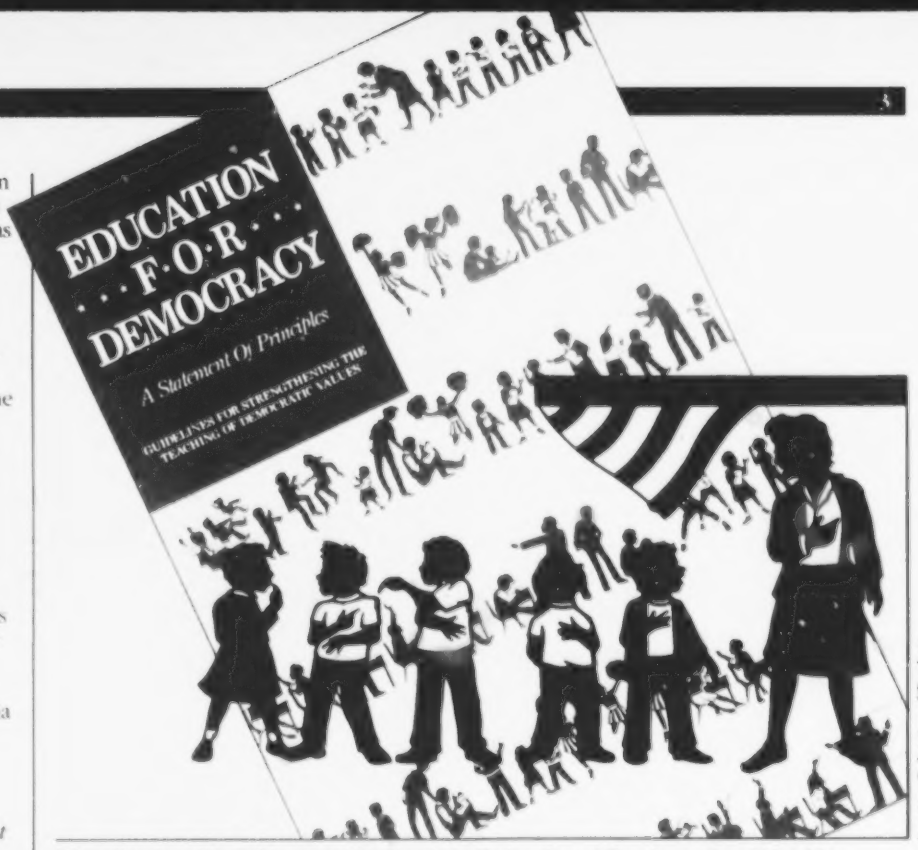
Suddenly, though, interest in education for democratic citizenship has perked up. Part of the renewed interest stems from the bicentennial celebration of the Constitution, which presents a natural occasion to review what today's students are learning about the way government works.

In the last year, a number of well-publicized projects based on core curriculums have been launched. Each calls for revitalizing (and re-naming) civics course content within a traditional history and social studies core. The American Federation of Teachers, for example (in league with Freedom House and Columbia University's Educational Excellence Network), has launched a nationwide campaign to promote "Education for Democracy" to parents and educators.

The project's opening salvo, a *Statement of Principles*, was endorsed by 153 well-known educators and other opinion leaders. They perceived a need not for "crash courses in the right attitudes," but for a history and humanities core that leads to understanding the historical and philosophical foundations of American democracy.[8] Decision making and problem solving must also be part of this developmental sequence, the statement said, because "the essence of democracy, its reason for being, is constant choice."[9]

Among other clarion calls for citizenship education:

- People for the American Way, a civil liberties watchdog group organized by television producer Norman Lear, has convened groups to examine the pros and cons of textbooks on American history (1985) and government and civics (1987). The latter, it was discovered, shy away from all controversy and "read with all the life of the *Federal Register*," President Anthony Podesta chided at ASCD's Annual Conference earlier this year. Planning is under way to propose new course models.
- The Constitutional Rights Foundation has teamed up with the Foundation for Teaching Economics to develop a model course on "Our Democracy: How It Works."[10]
- Other organizations with an interest in education for citizenship are turning out new materials and guidelines. "The goal," said Charles Quigley, director of the Center for Civic Education, "is to involve kids in Socratic dialogs, mock trials, and other approaches that will show them the realities of how government works."[11]
- Some educators place citizenship at the center of a new social studies core curriculum. As Michael Hartoonian and Margaret Laughlin, for example, stated unequivocally, "Our first priority—our first public policy goal—is to ensure our survival as a free nation through the development of enlightened citizens."[12]




American Federation of Teachers

**Education for citizenship, says the American Federation of Teachers, should lead to understanding of historical and philosophical foundations, not "crash courses in the right attitudes."**

## Losing and Finding Geography

In the last three or four years, interest in geography at nearly all grade levels has also revived after a long stretch of neglect. David Pierpoint Gardner, who chaired the commission that produced *A Nation at Risk*, showed the extent of our disregard in a 1986 paper for the Association of American Geographers:

> In 1960–61, only 14 percent of America's 7–12 graders were enrolled in geography courses. This was a lower percentage than had been standard for years. By the mid-1970s, however, the figure had dropped to 9 percent.[13]

"Very logical connections" link geography, political science, and history, Gardner asserted, and he cited an "urgent need" to improve the teaching of geography.[14]

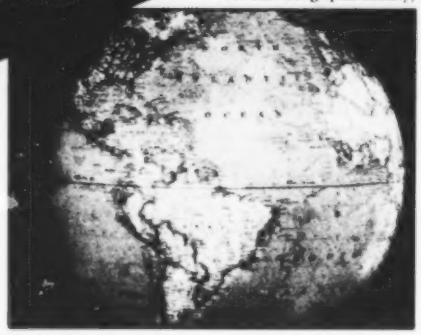
Warming to Gardner's position, the National Geographic Society has established its Geography Education Program, a 10-year, $4-million project to stimulate enthusiasm, create materials, and bolster teacher training in geography. Program components include:

- research and development of computer software and videodisc programs;
- research and development of the National Geographic Kids Network (now being piloted in 30 schools, eventually to spread to 10,000); the system links elementary school children by telecommunications so they can gather and study scientific and geographic data;
- dissemination of free maps and taping rights to the society's television specials;
- sponsorship of state-level alliances of university geographers, policymakers, and teachers that promote teacher training and curriculum changes necessary to improve geography courses; and
- establishment of a four-week summer training institute for teachers, who are then obliged to organize three local workshops.

The ghastly ignorance of location demonstrated in the CBS study and explained in Gardner's figures may not be the only reason for the somewhat sudden revival of geography. What Robert Muller has called the "invasion of global concerns into the curriculum" may also be a stimulus. Muller, a retired U.N. Assistant Secretary-General who has recently founded the University for Peace in Costa Rica, recalled at ASCD's 1987 conference that when he joined the U.N. in 1948, the only global concern was the new atom bomb.

It was not until the 1970s, Muller went on, that the world population recognized

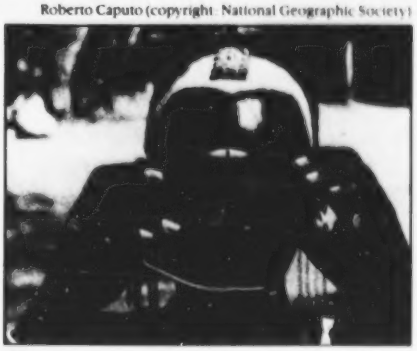
Joseph H. Bailey (copyright: National Geographic Society)



***Location***

**Absolute: Where is it?**
**Relative: How accessible is it?**

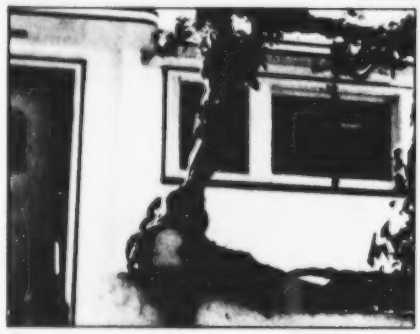
Roberto Caputo (copyright: National Geographic Society)



***Place***

**What is the environment like?**
**What are the people like?**

Kit Salter



***Environment/Human Interaction***

**How do people adapt to the environment?**

serious common problems, including population topping five billion in June of this year, environmental and energy concerns, desertification and deforestation, the continuing threat of nuclear arms, world accidents like Bhopol and Chernobyl, and world diseases like AIDS.

Perhaps the urgency of understanding and coping with such problems has also contributed to an expanded conception of geography. In the past, geography usually amounted to memorization drill and rather mechanical map study. Some leading educators now see the subject as a central part of the social studies core, not just because it is useful to know locations, but because it helps students understand basic human-environment interactions and the nature of interdependence.[15]

## 1987: A Pivotal Year?

In the effort to consolidate a social studies core, 1987 may turn out to be a pivotal year. What has emerged so far is a state- and national-level push for a revised social studies core, one that stresses preparation for citizenship through history, civics, and (probably) geography.

What is the impact of this pressure on practice? Only an impressionistic answer is now possible. Educators apparently now range from "somewhat informed" to "oblivious to" state and national efforts to reform the social studies core. Most teachers and administrators contacted for this *Curriculum Update* had only a sketchy knowledge of developments. The statements of curriculum seem to have influenced local schools and districts only when a key administrator or curriculum supervisor has been part of an organization sponsoring a curriculum project.

Those who have followed the work being done at state and national levels do not always see the quest for a pleasingly composed core as helpful to the seasoned line educator. As an assistant principal from Miami, Fla., commented:

> As statements of goals or even intent, these organizations are providing some noble language, but little else. We're already far down the road marked "excellence," and our needs are much more specific.[16]

## Balkanized Social Studies

To those not opposed to mixing metaphors, the first current could also be thought of as a gravitational force, pulling together and organizing a system of knowledge. The issues-oriented crosscurrent then logically would become centrifugal force, which spins the social studies curriculum out toward multiplex variation.

In this trend, which has been called "the balkanization of the social studies," thousands of diverse courses, minicourses, and study units have been created. They usually originate with teachers who are eager to share some special interest or personal experience. In three adjoining towns in western Massachusetts, for example:

- For several weeks, ninth graders studied a Holocaust Studies unit, developed by a creative and committed teacher.
- Meanwhile, ninth-graders in a neighboring school studied Israel, where the teacher who developed the unit had spent the previous summer.
- Ninth-grade students in a private school studied crosscultural perceptions and misperceptions by focusing on Ecuador and Peru. Their teacher knew those countries well, having lived there two years while serving in the Peace Corps.

Some observers deplore such splintering of the social studies curriculum. They see it as a throwback to the do-your-own-thing formlessness of the 1960s.[17] Involved teachers and their administrators disagree. They reason, as did Lennox Curriculum Coordinator Karen Conklin, that "there are times when the curriculum framework has to bend so that we can take advantage of what each teacher does best."[18]

Such teachers and administrators also think that social studies in response to a real-world agenda is perfectly consistent with the major reform efforts of this decade and actually gets closer to excellence than going back to a traditional core. Some argue further that the exploration of vital issues and world cultures amounts to a "new core" of knowledge and coping skills (which Boyer has called "education for survival").[19] At the spring 1987 meeting of the Rocky Mountain Council for the Social Studies, for example, teachers could select workshops unified by "the *hard choices* we face in teaching the social studies in the 1980s and beyond."[20] That theme proliferated, however, into a long list of contemporary issues, such as aging, arms control, international trade issues, sentencing and corrections, and national security.

## Make Room for the World

As interest in issues and understanding other cultures has pushed once-popular social science courses into a noticeable decline, another contender for curriculum time—global education—has won wide acceptance. According to Rose Hayden, president of the National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies, more than 40 states have passed course mandates or resolutions of support for global or international education.[21]

The way global education has been incorporated has increased the centrifugal force pushing the social studies curriculum toward myriad variety. This need not have happened. A world perspective could emerge from courses in a core curriculum; instead it is almost universally thought to require new courses and units. New York's new social studies curriculum, for example, calls for integration of global education concepts into most K-12 curriculum areas *and* requires a global studies course in grade nine or ten. While the infusion of a global perspective into existing subjects is becoming more

Bruce Dale (copyright: National Geographic Society)

***Movement***
**How do people, ideas, and materials move?**

Craig Aurness/West Light (copyright National Geographic Society)

***Regions***
**How do they form?**
**How do they change?**

popular, area studies and global issues courses have shown the greatest increase. More than twenty magnet schools or schools-within-schools are based on global studies.

## The Trouble with Mandates

Many of the teachers and curriculum specialists who have developed issues-oriented courses are not pleased with the state mandates for the new courses or with the standardized tests that accompany them. They perceive these education department efforts as intrusions that unify at the expense of local decision making. As one department chair remarked, "We can no longer teach to our strengths. We're far too busy teaching to a test."[22]

Other proponents of the issues-based current are uneasy about any step that might lead to a "national curriculum"; still others see the state actions as caving in to conservatism and reinforcement of the status quo. Donald Bragaw, director of New York State's social studies curriculum and past president of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), encountered this kind of local resistance when NCSS proposed a scope and sequence in 1984. The council's board decided not to produce *the* definitive social studies scope and sequence, but kept the process open and invited "alternative" frameworks.[23] Shirley Engle and Anna Ochoa proposed an alternative approach, for instance, that built the scope and sequence of courses around "problems."[24]

Some teachers also claim that state requirements, like the public ruminations over core components, do not take the realities of the classroom into account. "I'm told to have weekly conferences with my students," one New Jersey teacher commented. "I'd love to do it, but how do I arrange 136 weekly meetings?"

In the push for citizenship education, we have an illustration of this perceived gap between state- or nationwide goal statements and the ends teachers try to achieve. While national authorities insist that a revitalized civics course should be the top priority of social studies, one recent study showed that teachers rate the citizenship goal fifth out of eight. Goals teachers saw as more important were: good work habits and discipline, basic literacy, academic excellence, and personal growth.[25]

## Trying Both Achieves Neither

The two currents that dominate efforts to renew social studies (a national one, often supported by state mandates, favoring a traditional core; a second "real-world" curriculum developed by local schools or districts) are not mighty forces on a collision course. On the contrary, they seem to be ignoring each other. Small conflicts are played out only at the local level as school district personnel decide how to incorporate a new state mandate into the curriculum. The NCSS compromise to invite alternative social studies frameworks seems to recognize the territorial prerogatives of local control.

The cross-purposes and mutual exclusivity of the these two reform currents, however, seem to contribute to the continuing confusion about what should be taught, how, and for what reason. Thus, social studies educators on different levels have an additional problem; while having to cope with a ready-fire-aim world, they cannot agree on where the bull's-eye is or even where the target is. Bernard Epstein, a Chicago curriculum specialist, commented on what happens when effort is divided in an attempt to hit both targets:

> I think too many schools, at least high schools, are trying to provide a traditional core *and* in-depth analyses of issues and cultures. The result is that they achieve neither—[they get] only a thin veneer of coverage.[26]

## Little Progress on Big Problems

The divergence of purpose in social studies is evidently a primary inhibitor of progress in several key areas: articulation of goals, selection of course content, development of critical thinking skills, and affirmation of values. On all these fronts, four years of reform have effected remarkably little change.

*The troublesome aspect of social studies goals, especially in the elementary grades, is that there don't seem to be any.* Teachers continue to be uncertain about what social studies is supposed to do. When asked to write what they hope to achieve, they list behavioral rather than intellectual outcomes: personal adjustment; cooperative behaviors; and library, test-taking, and essay-writing skills. Map reading is the only outcome that consistently distinguishes the goals of social studies from those of language arts.

Clearer goals don't seem to be on a fast evolutionary track, either. Goal statements in 1987 don't appear to have progressed at all beyond those John Goodlad and his associates found in the 1984 Study of Schooling.[27]

*Confusion about goals naturally complicates designation of appropriate content.* Our informal survey found widespread agreement that course content and objectives are firmly tied to state requirements, standardized tests, and textbooks. This determination of content by default becomes especially compelling in the case of the beguilingly expedient textbook.

Most junior and senior high school teachers continue to rely on the hardcover text. It is often accompanied by a Teacher's Resource Book replete with up to 1,000 pages of worksheets, lesson plans, and short tests. The result is an emphasis on coverage.

That compulsion to cover in turn produces three negative effects. Superficiality is the first. Take the standard U.S. history textbook as an example. By striving to present history chronologically *and* tuck in information on national and global issues, one typical book (published in 1986) covered the post World War II struggles of American Indians in two sentences, dispatched the Holocaust in one, and lavished three on terrorism. The nuclear debate after 1960 was not discussed at all.

Coverage of a seemingly endless array of disassociated facts also seems to project an image of social studies that is, to speak plainly, deadly dull. People for the American Way concluded from its recent government and civics textbook study,

"What emerges is a portrait of government as lifeless institutions and mechanical processes, remote from politics and citizens."[28]

"Pressure for coverage," added Fred M. Newmann of the University of Wisconsin, also prevents educators from helping students to "use their minds in sustained inquiry," just as it impedes the process approach to thinking and writing in the language arts. Newmann recommended "a national project to reduce coverage, to give depth a chance."[29]

*Critical thinking is supported as a goal, but abandoned in practice.* The studies of schooling and the reforms that followed created awareness of how important thinking skills are. When teachers try to identify the goals they want their courses to serve, they invariably mention critical thinking, often appending other complex skills such as drawing inferences or making decisions.

Somewhere these aspirations get waylaid. In practice, the observer sees little attention paid to development of such skills and few opportunities for students to exercise them. "Every lesson plan I receive lists several complex thinking skills, but I'm rarely in a classroom where that is happening," rued one K-12 curriculum coordinator. In an article for *Social Education*, Matthew Downey agreed: "Like those display cases of stuffed birds in natural history museums, the lists of skills remain lifeless taxonomies."[30]

Textbooks compound the problem. They may lay out thinking skills objectives for every chapter and lesson and then consider their lip service paid in full. Textbooks commonly provide no further guidance in skill acquisition or opportunities to practice critical thinking.

Even new state guidelines and course syllabuses have reinforced low-level memorization and drill. One social studies guide from a state department of education advises teachers that "the first task is to decide which information is to be memorized."

*Values education is another vital social studies function that has shown little improvement after four years of reform.* The transmission of values in social studies continues to be thwarted by the extreme caution of the back-to-basics movement—a thermidorean* reaction to the social criticism and unbalanced approach taken in the 1960s.

The present treatment of values is like a debate to which nobody came. Textbooks try, in the main, to stay value-free. They include as inoffensive a reinforcement of contemporary civic values as possible and stop there. The policy is to avoid conflict, even in nationwide organizations and institutions. In 1983, for example, a report issued by the NCSS Task Force on Scope and Sequence in the Social Studies declared that values education would be limited to "democratic beliefs and values." This included, the task force explained, only those "civic values about which a consensus is thought to exist among the American people."[31]

As the current reform era unfolds, leading social studies educators have begun to insist that value questions be confronted in an open, honest way. They contend this is possible—without civil uprisings—if teachers and administrators (1) develop a strategy that takes community concerns into account and (2) honestly show their commitment to democratic values and willingness to admit uncertainty about complex issues.

Matthew Downey, for example, believes that social studies courses are ideal opportunities to plumb systems of values. "The historical orientation of the social studies," he wrote, "allows students to raise questions about values and valuing in contexts other than their own immediate social environment."[32]

If the social studies are increasingly going to stress the humanities, as scholars appear to think they should, the exploration of values cannot be sidestepped. As A. Bartlett Giamati stated at the 1986 Yale University Humanities Conference, "Basically, the humanities are modes of thinking that are value-laden."[33]

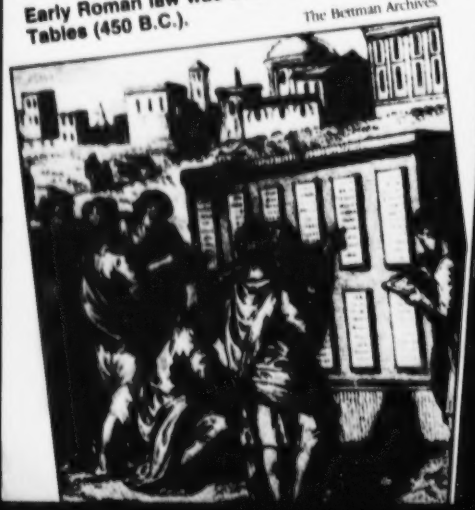
Most of us involved with reformulation of the social studies have found the process longer and the job more arduous than we expected. Problems in the social studies, some of which afflict other subject areas as well, have proved very resistant to change. Many school people have invested three or more years of committee work, agonized in staff meetings, trained in summer workshops, listened patiently to consultants, and more—only to find consensus still elusive on key issues and little if any improvement in classroom practices. Even teachers who have been directly involved in the long, difficult effort to revitalize the social studies are handicapped by institutional customs like teacher talk, textbook dependence, and a read-and-remember approach to learning.

The persistent sway of such practices, Goodlad has suggested, explains why from grades seven and eight through graduation, students regularly list social studies as their least favorite and least interesting course, even though they express interest in the topics treated in the social studies.[34] Goodlad's reflections on about 20 years of stymied progress seem as current in 1987 as they did in 1984.

*A thermidorean period is a moderate counterrevolutionary phase wherein order is restored, tensions are relaxed, and life returns to normal. The word comes from *thermidor*, the French Revolutionary Calendar month in which Robespierre and his supporters were guillotined and the Reign of Terror ended.

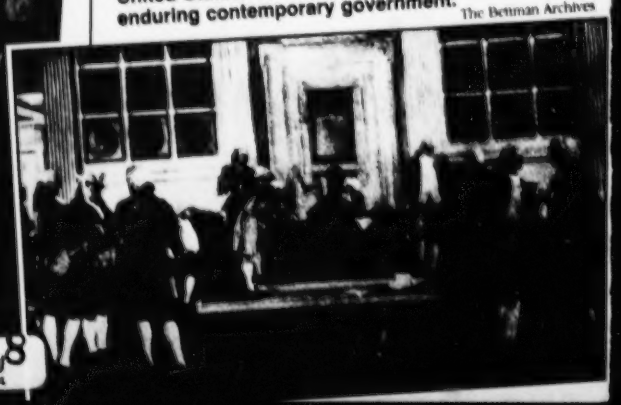
**What should be in the social studies core? Certainly history belongs.**

**Early Roman law was codified on the Twelve Tables (450 B.C.).** The Bettman Archives



**In 1215, King John reluctantly signed the Magna Charta, restricting his divine right as king.** The Bettman Archives

**The 1787 signing of the Constitution of the United States initiated the world's most enduring contemporary government.** The Bettman Archives



We are unable to discern much attention to pupil needs, attainments, or problems as a basis for individual opportunities to learn. Teaching was predominantly telling and questioning—we are forced to conclude that much of the so-called educational reform movement has been blunted at the school door.[35]

## Cautious Optimism

Despite stubborn obstacles, one sees hopeful signs and senses a mood of cautious optimism among social studies educators.

One hopeful sign is that the major ideas and recommendations of the current reform era have endured intact. Leading educators and agencies have articulated a rather simple set of messages, and these have percolated into our thinking about education in general and social studies in particular. Bragaw finds, for example, that the alternative curriculum frameworks submitted to NCSS all share certain common features:

- a clear commitment to democratic values,
- knowledge of and pride in our local and national heritage,
- interest in understanding the form and function of government and the economy, including the ability to compare different systems,
- a need to engage in more active civic participation,
- a strong emphasis on active learning to replace the read-and-respond, lecture-and-textbook approach, and
- cosmopolitan appreciation of other cultures and value systems.[36]

These ideas have been presented so often that we have internalized them, and a surprising percentage of new frameworks developed by school and district committees would fit in well with all these themes. History and government are emphasized, for example, while current issues (including economic matters) or other cultures (including conflicting value systems) are not slighted.

Another notion we have absorbed since the 1983 reports is that the substance of the social studies course cannot be separated from the kind of learning environment within which it proceeds. An active learner is thought to have a better chance to succeed than does a passive, text-bound recipient of information.

That values-free education tends not to work is now similarly accepted. The commitment to values education will vary from school to school and district to district, as it should, but the awareness stands that confronting values in historical or social scientific settings can be highly successful.

William Mortarty

**Teachers blow up the world as part of the National Geographic Society's second annual geography institute, a component of the Society's multimillion-dollar effort to improve geography education. One North Carolina teacher commented, "We need a required course in geography. My students love to surf, but they're not always sure what ocean they're doing it in!"**

These broad areas of consensus have been nurtured by state- or nationwide agencies and organizations. Their support of educational renewal through sleek, sometimes eloquent publications has helped create community and faculty commitment to major reform ideas.

Concurrently, state and national models and guides reveal a new awareness of local school concerns and need. In publications urging revamped civics courses, both the American Federation of Teachers and People for the American Way carefully respected "local initiative" and "local decision making." By accommodating alternative social studies frameworks, NCSS recognized the importance of school and district imperatives and aspirations. Several recent curriculum renewal models describe effective stategies for change at the school and district levels; earlier this year, ASCD published one of these, *Curriculum Renewal*, by Allan Glatthorn.

Several other factors intensify the upbeat mood:

- *Materials.* Teachers have access to a fantastic array of high-quality teaching materials and guides to improvement. After several years of experience with the microchip, education agencies and institutions can now make software available, often at low prices.

- *Support.* Teachers and administrators can rely on larger, better organized, and more visible support systems. The number of organizations competing for school or district attention has fallen off dramatically in this decade, largely because of mergers of two or more agencies. The ERIC-CHESS Clearinghouse, for example, now combined with the Social Studies Development Center at Indiana University, has added a leadership function to its traditional job of data storage and retrieval.

- *Outreach.* In concert with the two preceding developments, universities and education associations have improved their outreach networks. Workshops and the demonstration of classroom models have been critically important in developing teacher awareness, confidence, and know-how.

- *Textbooks.* The economic and political pressure is on for textbooks to confront controversy more directly. California's rejection of a slew of science texts that pussyfooted around evolution showed the power of demand, for example. As this is written, ASCD is poised to release *Religion in the Curriculum*, which declares, "Publishers should revise textbooks and other instructional materials to provide adequate treatment of diverse religions and their roles in American and world culture. . ."

- *Learning theory.* Since 1983, a lot has been discovered about how children and young people learn. This experience informs efforts to create materials and inservice programs.

- *New approaches.* As leading educators develop new approaches that are well supported by theory, teachers are learning these principles, applying them to social studies topics, and gaining a greater degree of mastery. The process approach to writing and a variety of approaches to thinking skills, for instance, can be brought to bear on social studies subjects.

As such developments unify and formulate a more cohesive perspective on the social studies, hope and determination are increasingly justified. Without any Pollyanna-style visions, it does seem possible that 1987 will be the year that reform of the social studies at last comes of age.■

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## Resources in the Social Studies

### On Scope and Sequence

**The new *California Framework*,** about to be released as this *Curriculum Update* is written, will reflect the major reform ideas developed since 1983. The California State Department of Education's address is 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814.

***Social Education* printed the "Task Force Report on Scope and Sequence"** in social studies (April, 1984). Alternative frameworks appeared in Nov./Dec. 1986 and April/May 1987. *Social Education* is published by the National Council for the Social Studies, 3501 Newark St., Washington, DC 20016.

**Allan Glatthorn's *Curriculum Renewal*** (1987) provides useful guidelines for establishing and achieving goals. His model, which school or district personnel can apply to the restructuring of any course, is available through ASCD, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2798.

### On Teaching Critical Thinking and Other Skills

**ERIC/CHESS publishes a monthly newsletter, *Keeping Up*, and frequent *ERIC Digests*** that describe ways to foster skill development. The Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education is at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, IN 47405.

**For developing thinking, writing, and reading skills in civic education, try *Law in a Free Society*.** Charles N. Quigley directed the project to develop these excellent K-12 learning activities. For information, write the Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, CA 91302.

**Guidelines, research, and teaching ideas are collected in *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*.** Arthur L. Costa edited this outstanding compendium, published by ASCD, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2798.

National Geographic Society

**The Great Barrier Reef, National Geographic Society President Gilbert Grosvenor points out, is one instance of geographic location affecting cultural and economic ideas.**

***Guidelines for Geographic Education for Elementary and Secondary Schools*** have been jointly established by the Association of American Geographers and The National Council for Geographic Education. Single copies can be ordered for $3; bulk rates are available. Write AAG at 1710 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009 *or* NCGE at Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL 61455.

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